

Questions for the Child Advocate Nominee

By: Jessica Callahan, Legislative Analyst II
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Child Advocate ([CGS § 46A-13K et seq.](#))

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is a division within the Office of Governmental Accountability but has independent decision-making authority.

The child advocate's duties include:

1. evaluating the delivery of state agency service to children;
2. reviewing agency procedures to protect children's rights;
3. investigating complaints and, when indicated, advocating on behalf of the child's best interests;
4. taking all possible actions to ensure the legal, civil, and special rights of all children; and
5. providing technical training to attorneys representing children.

Questions

1. What do you see as the most pressing needs of Connecticut's children and youth?
2. Many of our child welfare laws are based on the concept of "best interest of the child." What does this phrase mean to you?
3. One of the child advocate's responsibilities is to review state agencies' procedures for providing services to children, with a view toward promoting children's rights. What rights do you believe children have? How do children's rights balance against their parents' or caretakers' rights?

4. By law, the child advocate must recommend changes in state policies concerning children, including changes in juvenile justice, child care, and foster care. What policy changes do you believe are most important at this time?
5. How do you plan to continue to build and foster trust between OCA and other public and private agencies?
6. In October 2019, OCA released a status [update](#) on an investigation into child sexual abuse within the New London Public School District (NLPS). The update states that, "school-based child sexual abuse is both more prevalent and less likely to be reported than people may realize." How do you plan to ensure that NLPS and other school districts report suspected child abuse or neglect in a timely manner?
7. [SA 19-16](#) required the Department of Children and Families (DCF), along with the departments of Public Health and Social Services, and OCA, to submit a report with recommendations regarding the licensure of the north and south Albert J. Solnit Center campuses by the Department of Public Health (DPH). Do you believe that the recommendations address the deficiencies DPH found at Solnit south to place children in "immediate jeopardy"?
8. According to the CT Post ("[After Hearst probe, state to combat human trafficking](#)," February 19, 2020), from 2016-2018 there were more than 200 children referred to DCF as high-risk or confirmed victims of human trafficking, most often sex trafficking. What steps should the legislature or executive branch take to address this issue?
9. OCA's 2019 [Drowning Data and Prevention Strategies](#) states that minority children are disproportionately affected by drowning, with black or Hispanic children accounting for nearly 65% of unintentional drowning deaths. Last year, the legislature established a dry-land water safety instruction pilot program with a focus on municipalities with high concentrations of minority populations that lack public school swimming facilities and water safety education programs ([SA 19-21](#)). What additional steps, if any, should the legislature or executive branch take to continue to address this issue?
10. Authorities recently opened a federal [investigation](#) into restrictive housing practices for juveniles incarcerated at Manson Youth Institution (MYI) following a January 2019 OCA [report](#) on confinement conditions. OCA found that MYI's use of isolation for behavior management constitutes solitary confinement and deprives youth of rehabilitative services. How does OCA intend to ensure that juveniles incarcerated at MYI have access to developmentally appropriate programming?

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